

Women's Major Group

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As UN Security Council meets on immediate crises in Gaza and Ukraine, Governments adopt a long term vision and set of goals for sustainable and peaceful development

Open Working Group forwards new set of Global Sustainable Development Goals to General Assembly: Women's Major Group Declares 'Adoption of Outcome a Significant Step but SDGs still lacking Real Ambition for Urgent Transformational Change' **Women's Major Group Final Statement** (Attached / [Linked](#))

NEW YORK: (21 July 2014) The Women's Major Group (WMG), representing 500 women's human rights, environment and development organizations that have engaged substantively in the negotiations of the Open Working Group on Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) throughout its one and a half year process, released a statement today, marking the end of the OWG's final session and proposal for a set of goals¹, raising critical red flags on the content and level of ambition encased in the proposed SDGs.

The final SDG text encompasses a broad spectrum of the three pillars of sustainable development: economic, social and environmental, and against much opposition, includes a goal on "peaceful and inclusive societies". There is a fair amount of progressive, development-oriented language, as well as some demonstration of political will to prioritize a more holistic framework for development through sustainability.

While appreciating and acknowledging efforts of the co-chairs and many countries to promote women's rights, engage civil society across the process and to push for more ambitious language, the WMG concludes the goals fall short of women's aspirations for a strong set of transformative goals needed to achieve gender equality, women's human rights, sustainable development in harmony with nature, and an end to inequalities.

Emilia Reyes, Coordinator at Equidad de Género, Mexico, a key advocate for the Women's Major Group, said *"We were facing an opportunity for radical change, to speak a new language in the world; a language that places the correct names on the social and environmental impacts of the obscene concentration of wealth in our societies; one that acknowledges how women are kept aside from the exercise of their rights by the sexual division of labor; and one that recognizes the interconnectedness of our daily lives and the health of the planet. We concluded with an important package of goals and targets addressing the social, environmental and economic pillars to achieve sustainable development. They could have been ambitious enough to achieve transformation. At present, they are not."*

Sascha Gabizon, Director of Women International for a Common Future, one of the coordinators of the Women's Major Group, said *"we commend those governments who have fought hard to secure and advance gender equality and women's human rights throughout this process, and stand firm in challenging countries who consistently have tried to*

¹ The OWG Outcome Document, proposing a new set of Sustainable Development Goals, can be accessed here: <http://sustainabledevelopment.un.org/focussdgs.html>

delete language around women and girl's rights. We commend the co-chairs for forging a compromise with all Member States and for not having given in to pressures to reduce the goals to the lowest common denominator. Even though the Women's Major Group believe that ambition should have been higher, the adoption of the SDG document by the Open Working Document is a significant step forward."

The **Women's Major Group statement** acknowledges certain gains, *"We welcome the standalone goals - on achieving gender equality and the empowerment of women and girls, on inequalities within and between countries; on environmental sustainability, and on climate change. We also commend that the goals aim to end poverty and hunger, ensure healthy lives, and universal access to water and sanitation for all"*.

However, the **statement** also strongly rejects that women's bodies and lives continue to be 'subjected to national agendas', despite consistent calls for a truly universal agenda grounded in human rights. In a strong message to Governments, the WMG stated, *"To those who are still denying our rights we reaffirm, again, that we will always refuse to have our lives used as bargaining chips. No agenda should be traded off. The entire world is at stake because of the narrow ways in which policies and actions are implemented. The significant global challenges we face requires a comprehensive ambitious agenda."*

Looking to the way forward for the SDGs, the Women's Major Group called on Member States to ensure the strongest participation of civil society, major groups and social movements in the process leading up to and following the Post-2015 Summit in September 2015. *"We call for an inclusive process, with full access and meaningful participation. A vibrant Major Groups and civil society presence, and our meaningful engagement, will be essential to the integrity of the forthcoming negotiations, as has been demonstrated by our participation in the Open Working Group on Sustainable Development Goals, where we have fostered essential links between the national and global levels."*

"It was a complex negotiation process amidst sharp differences and disputes among member states, thus taking this political reality into consideration, the adoption of the SDG document is a commendable achievement. The work going forward will be to ensure that General Assembly negotiations take place based on the document as it stands now, as well as in a manner that is inclusive, transparent and accountable", says **Bhumika Muchala of Third World Network**.

Eleanor Blomstrom, Program Director of the Women's Environment and Development Organization, one of the coordinators of the WMG shared, *"The red flags show that the Women's Major Group – and the world – have much unfinished business to ensure the transformation to rights-based sustainable development. But we are not daunted by the task at hand and will magnify each opportunity and create new ones to get the world on a new track where actions for justice and equality trump corporate interest, in solidarity with women leaders and activists worldwide."*

Addressing next steps, **Reyes added:** *"What comes next? The women's and feminist movements will embrace the challenge of devising a language that reinvents the world, never falling to silence. This outcome is the sign of a new phase and we are ready to strengthen it with our work and ideas."*

The Women's Major Group (WMG), comprised of over 500 organizations, takes responsibility for facilitating women's civil society input into the policy space provided by the United Nations (participation, speaking, submission of proposals, and access to documents). The WMG is self-organized and open to all interested organizations working to promote human rights based sustainable development with a focus on women's and girl's human rights, women's empowerment and gender equality.

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